

## Section VI

# Implementation, Operations, and Management Plan

### Overview

*The implementation of the master plan for Lebanon Hills Regional Park will require significant initial and long-term capital investments.*

The implementation of the master plan for Lebanon Hills Regional Park will require significant initial and long-term capital investments for ecological stewardship, physical development, operations, maintenance, and programming. In all likelihood, implementation will occur over a number of years as funding and resources become available and plans become refined and ready for implementation. The following considers an overall strategy for implementation of the plan.

This section also considers the operations and management of the park. Although not all of Dakota County's operations and management policies are reiterated, those that held particular public interest or act in support of the master plan are considered in this section.

### Ecological Stewardship Program Cost Projections

*The ecological stewardship program for the park is a top priority. To understand the potential magnitude of restoring and managing these resources, a unit-basis cost projection was completed.*

Restoration and management of the ecological resources within the park is still in its relative infancy. Expectantly, Dakota County does not have an extensive cost record that could be used for projecting costs associated with undertaking larger scale stewardship programs. Given this, projecting the cost for implementing a comprehensive program offers certain practical limitations since we are dealing with a living environment with many nuances that will take years to understand completely.

The ecological stewardship program for the park is a top priority. To understand the potential magnitude of restoring and managing these resources, a unit-basis cost projection was completed. The following provides a breakdown of potential costs for initial restoration and long-term stewardship. The unit costs were derived from past projects in this region of a similar nature. The cover type categories are limited to three that represent a cross-section of the plant communities found within the park. The critical difference between each category is the propensity for trees versus grasses, upland versus lowland, and hydrologic and soil variables that affect restoration efforts and timeframes.

Potential Initial Restoration Costs			
Cover Type	Acres*	Range of Cost/Acre	Total Cost
Upland Forest Communities (Mesic Forest, Oak Savanna, Etc.)	1,150.00	2,500 to 5,000	2,875,000 to 5,750,000
Upland Prairie	200.00	1,500 to 3,000	300,000 to 600,000
Wetland and Bog Systems	200.00	1,500 to 5,000	300,000 to 1,000,000
Total Potential Cost for Remedial Work			3,475,000 to 7,350,000

Potential Yearly Long-Term Maintenance and Management Costs			
Cover Type	Acres*	Range of Cost/Acre*	Total Cost
Upland Forest Communities (Mesic Forest, Oak Savanna, Etc.)	1,150.00	125 to 175	143,750 to 201,250
Upland Prairie	200.00	125 to 175	25,000 to 35,000
Wetland and Bog Systems	200.00	175 to 225	35,000 to 45,000
Total Potential Cost for <u>Yearly</u> Maintenance Work			203,750 to 281,250

\* Acres are exclusive of the lake and pond systems.

As the tables define, the range of potential costs at this level of evaluation is quite broad simply due to the uncertainties of what will be encountered. What is certain is that the longer one waits to begin these programs the higher the costs are likely to be.

### Cost Projections for High Priority Sites

By applying the unit cost values used above, the following table projects the costs for restoring and managing the high priority sites defined in Section IV. These costs are provided to give Dakota County a budget figure for implementing the initial phases of the stewardship program.

Projected Costs for Restoring and Managing High Priority Sites				
Site	Description	Cost Projection for Initial Restoration		Cost Projection for Ongoing Maintenance (Funding Needed on a Year-to-Year Basis)
	Remnant native prairie sites.	20,000	to 40,000	1,500 to 2,100
A	Groundwater recharge area west of McDonough Lake. (Does not include water resource related improvements)	17,350	to 30,500	1,375 to 1,925
B	Existing RV campground area.	24,750	to 53,500	1,250 to 1,750
C	Area adjacent to existing entrance road and Schulze Lake use area. (Subject to Water Management Plan findings.)	25,000	to 57,200	1,600 to 2,240
D	Tamarack bog area.	42,000	to 90,000	3,500 to 4,900
E	Mesic forest/oak savanna area south of Jensen Lake.	130,000	to 260,000	6,500 to 9,100
F	Oak savanna system in degrading condition.	140,000	to 286,000	7,250 to 10,150
G	Upland prairie system in degraded condition.	130,000	to 265,000	7,300 to 10,220
H	Oak savanna system in degraded condition.	100,000	to 196,000	5,250 to 7,350
<b>Total Projected Cost for High Priority Sites</b>		629,100	to 1,278,200	35,525 to 49,735

Note that the costs defined in the table are wide ranging due to the inherent uncertainty of the exact state that a given ecological system is in and the extent of work that needs to be undertaken. What is important is to determine a working budget and then work through the priority list one step at a time within that budget amount.

## Water Resources Management Plan Cost Projections

*Projecting the potential costs for implementing a comprehensive water management plan is difficult to ascertain given the many variables that are yet to be considered as the vision for this plan evolves out of this master planning process.*

Projecting the potential costs for implementing a comprehensive water management plan is difficult to ascertain given the many variables that are yet to be considered as the vision for this plan evolves out of this master planning process. Depending on what this vision ultimately entails, the costs for implementing it will be both wide ranging and will likely be phased in over time. Lacking a final adopted plan, review of the current draft *Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan* dated May of 2000 prepared for Dakota County reveals that the costs for water resources management on the site could be \$800,000. If mitigation of related impacts are considered along with “land value costs” for using the park for management of off-site stormwater, the cost to implement the plan could be \$2,000,000 or more. This would include items such as restoring ecological systems damaged through higher water levels, trail relocation, tree removal, and so forth. Whatever evolves from continued work on this draft plan realistically will carry with it substantial costs. However, one of the objectives of an ecological approach is to reduce the costs for building structures within the park. As such, every attempt would be made to lower and share the costs associated with water resources management.

## Development Program Cost Projections

*The following cost analysis defines the potential costs associated with each development component of the master plan.*

The following cost analysis defines the potential costs associated with each development component of the master plan. It is based on a combination of site-specific development issues and projects of similar size and complexity. The costs are also based on having the work completed by contractors and outside specialists. It does not take into consideration work that could be performed by County staff, volunteer groups or other means.

The cost figures are intended to be used for budgeting purposes, project phasing, and comparing the relative cost of one item to that of another. The costs are in 2001 dollars. Although the intent is to be conservative, it must be recognized that actual costs will vary depending on the economy when each aspect of the master plan is implemented and the conditions found in the field during construction.

Development Program Cost Projections		
Master Plan Component	General Description of Cost Items Included in Estimate	Cost Estimate (In Dollars)
Connector Trails – 5.1 miles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removals required for building new trails.</li> <li>2) Grading, and trailbed preparation, including some soils corrections.</li> <li>3) 8' and 10' wide stabilized aggregate trail.</li> <li>4) Boardwalk systems across wetlands and ponds.</li> <li>5) Tunnel under street (Johnny Cake Ridge Road)</li> <li>6) Misc. improvements (retaining walls, etc.)</li> <li>7) Storm sewer systems (culverts, diversions).</li> <li>8) Pedestrian lighting at road crossings and in use areas.</li> <li>9) Landscaping and re-vegetation.</li> </ol>	1,300,000
Nature Trails – 14.8 miles (new and existing)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removals required for building new trails.</li> <li>2) Grading, and trailbed preparation, including some soils corrections.</li> <li>3) 2' to 6' wide trail development, with an allowance for stabilized aggregate on high use trails. (Assumes 50% of trails will require upgrading/realignment)</li> <li>4) Boardwalk systems across wetlands and waterways.</li> <li>5) Storm sewer systems (culverts, diversions).</li> <li>6) Misc. improvements (retaining walls, etc.)</li> <li>7) Landscaping and re-vegetation.</li> </ol>	640,000
Equestrian Trails – 9.7 miles (new and existing)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removals required for building new trails.</li> <li>2) Grading, and trailbed preparation, including some soils corrections.</li> <li>3) 6' to 8' wide trail development, with allowance for stabilized aggregate on high use trails.</li> <li>4) Storm sewer systems (culverts, diversions).</li> <li>5) Landscaping and re-vegetation.</li> </ol>	200,000
Mountain Bike Trails – 4.5 miles (new and existing)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removals required for building new trails.</li> <li>2) Grading, and trailbed preparation, including some soils corrections.</li> <li>3) 2' to 6' wide trail development, with an allowance for stabilized aggregate on high use trails.</li> <li>4) Storm sewer systems (culverts, diversions).</li> <li>5) Landscaping and re-vegetation.</li> </ol>	60,000

Trailside Amenities – Overlooks, Observation Points, and Sitting Areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removals as required.</li> <li>2) Grading.</li> <li>3) Small wood platform overlooks, observation areas, and blinds. Total of 10.</li> <li>4) Sitting areas with bench. Total of 30.</li> <li>5) Natural landscape modifications for sitting (rocks)</li> <li>6) Landscaping and re-vegetation.</li> </ol>	150,000
Johnny Cake Ridge Road Trailhead	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Grading and site preparation.</li> <li>2) Up to 60 car parking lot. Asphalt surfaced, with some form of curb.</li> <li>3) Small restroom facility (pit toilets).</li> <li>4) Basic site amenities – kiosk, benches, picnic tables, trash receptacle, drinking fountain, etc.</li> <li>5) Electrical service to structures.</li> <li>6) Trail adjustments.</li> </ol>	215,000
Wheaton Pond Trailhead	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removal of existing buildings (in-holding property)</li> <li>2) Grading and site preparation.</li> <li>3) 20 car parking lot. Asphalt surfaced, with some form of curb.</li> <li>4) Basic site amenities – kiosk, benches, picnic tables, trash receptacle, etc.</li> <li>5) Trail connections.</li> </ol>	100,000
Equestrian Trailhead	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removal of old lot and drives.</li> <li>2) Grading and site preparation.</li> <li>3) 30 vehicle/trailer parking lot. Gravel surfaced, with some form of curb.</li> <li>4) Pit toilets. .</li> <li>5) Basic site amenities – kiosk, benches, picnic tables, trash receptacle, drinking fountain, tie-off rails, etc.</li> <li>6) Small picnic shelter.</li> <li>7) Electrical service to structures.</li> <li>8) Trail adjustments.</li> </ol>	190,000
Schulze Lake Use Area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removals, including existing road and some portions of parking lot.</li> <li>2) Grading and site preparation.</li> <li>3) Visitor Center</li> <li>4) Utilities (water, sanitary sewer, and electric).</li> <li>5) Outdoor learning area.</li> <li>6) Trailhead facilities – kiosks, picnic tables, grills, trash containers, drinking fountain/water tap, benches, etc.</li> <li>7) Redevelopment of the parking lots.</li> <li>8) Relocation of the entrance road.</li> <li>9) Contact station on entrance road.</li> <li>10) Security lighting</li> </ol>	2,450,000
Holland Use Area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Reconstruct shelter structure.</li> <li>2) Accessible trail from parking lot to lakeside amenities.</li> <li>3) Trail connection improvements.</li> <li>4) Landscaping enhancements.</li> <li>5) Security lighting.</li> </ol>	145,000

Beach Improvements (Schulze Lake Use Area)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removals.</li> <li>2) Grading and site preparation.</li> <li>3) Utilities (water, sanitary sewer, and electric).</li> <li>4) Improvements to beach area.</li> <li>5) New beach house</li> <li>6) Play equipment on beach.</li> <li>7) Miscellaneous improvements.</li> <li>8) Trails and walkways.</li> </ol>	390,000
Campground Use Area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Revegetation of RV camping area with native planting.</li> <li>2) Contact station building and related.</li> <li>3) Utilities (water, sanitary sewer, and electric).</li> <li>4) Group use area development.</li> <li>5) Grading and site preparation.</li> <li>6) Primitive campsite development.</li> <li>7) Miscellaneous improvements.</li> <li>8) Increase vegetative buffer in east loop.</li> <li>9) Access trails to ponds, canoe rack/sitting areas.</li> <li>10) Park reserve entrance monuments at main development area entrance.</li> <li>11) Entrance feature lighting.</li> </ol>	460,000
Camp Sacajawea	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Expansion of group use areas, including pit toilets, open shelter, etc.</li> <li>2) Expansion of the lodge.</li> <li>3) Utilities (water, sanitary sewer, and electric).</li> <li>4) Development of camper cabins and washhouse.</li> <li>5) Development of outdoor skills area.</li> <li>6) Improvements to the trail system within the camp area.</li> <li>7) Security fencing upgrades.</li> <li>8) Redesign of roads and parking lots.</li> <li>9) Grading and site preparation for above.</li> <li>10) Security lighting.</li> <li>11) Landscaping and re-vegetation.</li> </ol>	950,000
Canoe Course	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removals.</li> <li>2) Grading and site preparation.</li> <li>3) Basic amenities (signage, benches, etc.)</li> </ol>	30,000
Maintenance Facility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Demolition of existing facilities and site restoration</li> <li>2) Removals needed at new location.</li> <li>3) Grading and site preparation.</li> <li>4) Heated shop.</li> <li>5) Cold storage building.</li> <li>6) Yard space – asphalt surfaced area with fuel station and outdoor storage racks, etc.</li> <li>7) Utilities (water, sanitary sewer, and electric).</li> <li>8) Perimeter fencing.</li> <li>9) Access drive – asphalt with some type of curb.</li> <li>10) Walks.</li> <li>11) Security lighting.</li> <li>12) Utilities</li> <li>13) Landscaping and site restoration.</li> </ol>	2,900,000

Signage Program	1) Complete signage program.	140,000
Miscellaneous Site Amenities and Improvements	1) Budget figure for various park reserve amenities not defined above. 2) Demolition of County owned houses and structures. 3) Park-wide interpretive signage program.	350,000
<b>Total Master Plan Cost Estimate</b>		<b>10,670,000</b>
Construction Contingency (15%)		1,600,500
<b>Total Master Plan Cost Estimate with Contingency</b>		<b>12,270,500</b>
Professional Fees and Charges (Surveying, Design, Engineering, Etc.) (15%)		1,840,575
<b>Total Master Plan Cost Estimate with Contingency and Professional Fees and Charges</b>		<b>14,111,075</b>

## Property Acquisition Cost Projection

Property acquisition focuses entirely on the in-holdings that remain within the park. Thirteen private properties exist within the adopted park boundary. As defined in Section V, the total appraised value of these properties is \$3,769,300. Note, however, that appraised value does not represent the values that the properties would likely have on the open market. As such, the costs for acquiring these private properties is expected to be higher than the valuations shown – perhaps considerably so.

## Implementation Strategy and Priorities

*Given the overall magnitude of the potential costs, it is reasonable to expect that implementation of the master plan will be phased in over a period of time to coincide with funding opportunities.*

*The four categories reflect the major implementation challenges facing the park.*

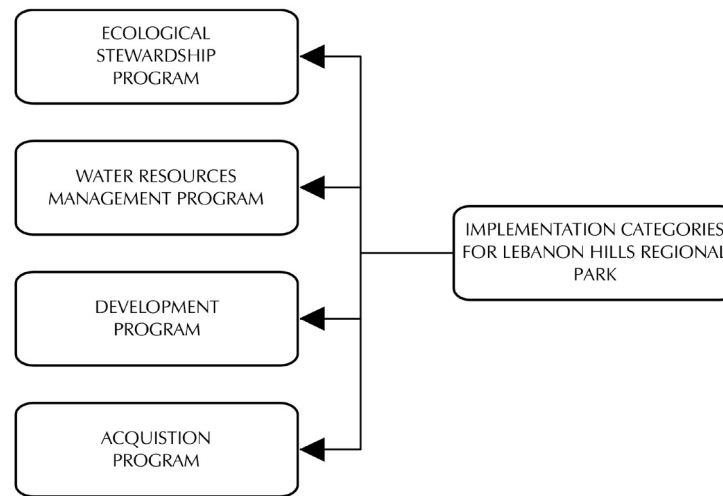
Given the overall magnitude of the potential costs, it is reasonable to expect that implementation of the master plan will be phased in over a period of time to coincide with funding opportunities. The following implementation strategy suggests various groupings of master plan components into a number of implementation categories.

## Implementation Categories

The implementation plan is broken down into four categories, as shown in figure 6.1 on the next page.

The four categories reflect the major implementation challenges facing the park. The implementation plan considers strategies and priorities for each of these in their own context and relative to the other categories. The reason for this is that the pace of implementing the priorities within each category will be dictated by many different factors that go beyond funding alone. This is especially the case with major upstart initiatives such as the stewardship and water resources programs that require both funding *and* technical expertise to implement.

Figure 6.1 – Implementation categories for Lebanon Hills Regional Park.



The following considers the overall balance between categories, which is then followed by discussion about priorities within each category.

### Implementation Priorities Balanced Between Categories

One of the positive outcomes of the planning process was gaining a much broader understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the park as defined under the four categories shown in figure 6.1. With each aspect of the master plan being important to the overall vision, taking a balanced approach to implementation was found to offer the highest potential toward ensuring that both cultural and ecological values are realized. Under this approach, ecological, water resource, and physical development concerns will be of equal priority as decisions are made regarding implementation strategies, funding packages, and maintenance and operations budget allocations.

A balanced approach also allows priorities within each category to be pursued simultaneously with those under other categories to take advantage of funding opportunities that may arise from various sources. This approach also allows for greater flexibility in developing effective implementation sequences that link physical development, ecological restoration, and water resources management objectives together whenever it is advantageous to do so.

A balanced approach also offers a greater degree of flexibility in adjusting plans within each category as needs change and new opportunities arise. The table on the next page provides a strategy statement for each of the categories to establish a starting point for developing specific implementation priorities.



Category	Overall Strategy Statement
Water Resources Management Program	Moving forward on refining this program is a high priority toward solving the long-term water resource issues that affect both on and off-site areas. Pragmatically, implementation of this program will be lock-stepped with some of the programs defined under the stewardship and development programs. Note also that long-term solutions to historic problems will require numerous steps, starting with developing a consensus water management plan that resolves fundamental water resources issues in an ecologically-sound manner that is favorable to the park as well as the surrounding neighborhoods.
Ecological Stewardship Program	As with the water resources program, moving forward on this program is a high priority to forestall the downward trend in the ecological quality of native plant communities. As with the above, this entails developing a long-term program that is carefully rolled-out over a period of time in sync with funding <i>and</i> scientific expertise.
Development Program	<p>Although listed third, continuing the implementation of the development program remains important to providing the cultural values defined by the plan. Lacking these values, gaining public support for implementing the other priorities becomes more challenging and uncertain. Also, as a regional park, Lebanon Hills plays a fundamental role in serving the recreational, educational, and spiritual needs of the region. This aspect of the plan cannot be overlooked if future generations of citizens are to maintain a commitment to stewardship of this resource.</p> <p>Important to all future development initiatives is to implement them with great sensitivity toward the surrounding landscape. Where applicable, new development initiatives should also seek to improve existing development areas to reflect the intent of the current master plan. The redevelopment of the Schulze Lake area as proposed under the master plan serves as an example of where a new development initiative can be the impetus for improving upon past developments.</p>
Acquisition Program	Although less of an priority than the above, establishing a plan to acquire the remaining in-holdings should be pursued. Even with a more assertive posture being recommended, the acquisition of remaining in-holdings is a long-term proposition.

*By being committed to balanced implementation of the master plan, the cultural and ecological values of the park will grow on par with each other, which in turn will enhance continued public support for realizing the park's full potential.*

The point to be taken from this discussion is that the implementation plan is a reflection of the vision for the park and establishes an overall strategy and set of priorities accordingly. By being committed to balanced implementation of the master plan, the cultural and ecological values of the park will grow on par with each other, which in turn will enhance continued public support for realizing the park's full potential. However, inherent to the plan is the need for flexibility to react to the real conditions, circumstances, and opportunities that present themselves. In this light, the greatest utility of the implementation plan is that it provides a framework and starting point for Dakota County to develop funding packages and grant applications to achieve the commonly held vision.

### Strategy for Implementing the Water Resources Management Program

The key priority is refining the water resources management program to align it with the vision of an ecologically-based approach to surface and ground water management as defined in Section V. Once that is completed, aggressive implementation of the plan is recommended. The following table defines the phasing program for the Water Resource Management Program.

Implementation Priority	Implementation Focus Recommended Under this Phase	Total Costs (In Dollars)
Priority 1 – Prepare a Final Water Resources Management Program	Focus is on merging the vision for an ecologically-based water resources management program defined in this master plan with previous plans prepared for the park and those prepared for adjoining communities. The end result would be defined implementable strategies and priorities.	\$30,000 to \$50,000
Priority 2 – Implement High Priority Aspects of the Program for Areas Within the Park.	Focus is on implementing high priority aspects of the final program within the park.	Budget figure for first phase: \$300,000 to \$400,000
Priority 3 – Implement High Priority Aspects of the Program Outside the Park.	Focus is on implementing high priority aspects of the final program for areas outside the park. An example of a high priority is working with adjoining communities on ensuring that new developments are ecologically-sound and will have no negative impacts on the park.	Undefined.
Priority 3 (and beyond).	Continued roll-out of the water resources program in sync with available funding – both on an off-site.	Undefined.

A portion of the funding avenues for implementing a Water Resources Management Program would likely be through Dakota County capital improvement appropriations or Metropolitan Council grant programs. State and Federal grant programs may also apply. In addition, cost sharing with benefitting parties may be appropriate. In all likelihood, it will be a combination of numerous sources spread out over an extended period of time.

### Strategy for Ecological Stewardship Program

Developing and implementing an ecological stewardship program for the park is a top priority that emerged from the planning process. Clearly, there is a sense of urgency to moving forward with this program in order to reverse the ecological trends now occurring in the park.

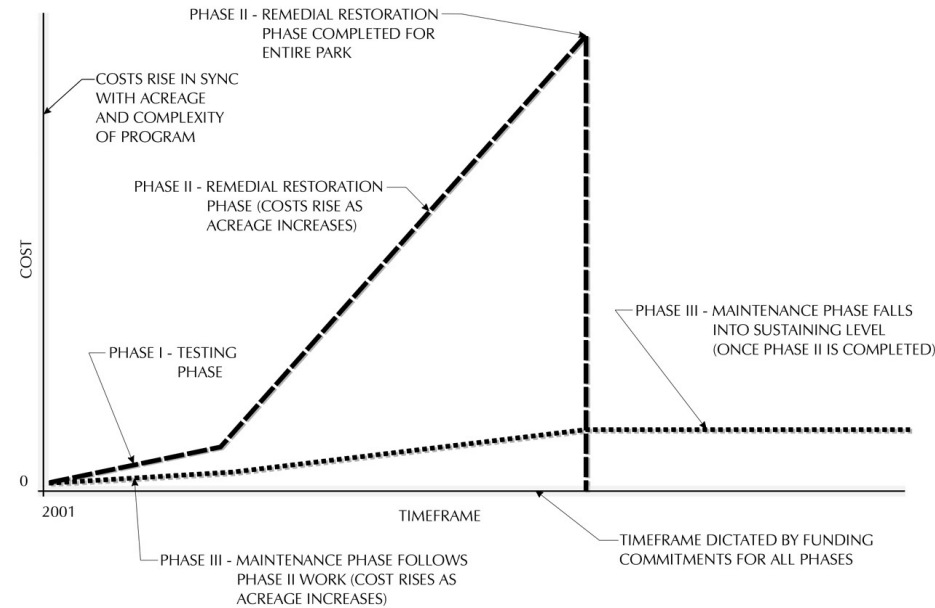
From a funding strategy perspective, the most critical factor is having a perpetual funding source in place for long-term management prior to undertaking the initial restoration activities. Lacking this funding source, gains made during initial restoration could easily be lost if not followed by prudent management in future years. In essence, the park is a living environment that can only be sustained through the careful acts of man replicating (as best one can) the natural cycles once present. This very notion gets to the core of a land ethic that takes on the responsibility today for the natural environment that Dakota County hopes to foster 10, 20, 50 years hence.

With respect to a specific strategy, the funding program for initial restoration needs to be lock-stepped with the Phase I (testing phase) and Phase II (remedial phase) of the stewardship program as defined in Section IV.

*From a funding strategy perspective, the most critical factor is having a perpetual funding source in place for long-term management prior to undertaking the initial restoration activities.*

Of equal importance, the funding program for long-term stewardship needs to be lock-stepped with Phase III (maintenance phase) of the program. Figure 6.2 provides an overview of how the three phases relate to each other in terms of funding levels needed to support them.

Figure 6.2 – Shifts in funding levels in support of stewardship programs.



As figure 6.2 illustrates, the cost for restoring the park's ecological systems far outpaces the costs of taking care of it once that is completed.

The bottom line is that restoring the park's natural systems to a sustainable level of quality should be done sooner rather than later.

As figure 6.2 illustrates, the cost for restoring the park's ecological systems far outpaces the costs of taking care of it once that is completed. What this means is that if the park is managed carefully, the extraordinary costs associated with restoring it can be largely controlled in the future as long as the maintenance phase continues indefinitely. Also, the longer that the park's ecological systems remain in a state of decline before efforts are made to manage it, the more expensive (and scientifically challenging) it will be to restore them. The bottom line is that restoring the park's natural systems to a sustainable level of quality should be done sooner rather than later. The following table provides an overview of the key funding phases associated with the ecological stewardship program.

Implementation Priority	Implementation Focus Recommended Under this Phase	Total Costs (In Dollars)
Priority 1 – Preparation of Stewardship Program	Focus is on building upon the framework presented under this master plan to prepare a stewardship program that details each phase of implementation. This includes detailed land cover classifications, refining prototypes, and developing restoration and management strategies for each condition that is found.	50,000 to 75,000
Priority 2 – Controlled Roll-Out of Restoration Program	Focus is on rolling-out the program in a controlled fashion that is supported by funding and scientific knowhow. (Section IV considers this in greater detail.) The funding amount shown on the right relates to high priority sites as defined earlier in this section.	Restoration Phase Costs: 629,100 to 1,278,200 Maintenance Phase Costs (Yearly): 35,525 to 49,735
Priority 3 (and beyond).	Continued roll-out of the stewardship program in sync with available funding.	Undefined.

From a funding strategy standpoint, a fairly typical capital improvement fund would suffice for funding of the *first two phases of the stewardship program* (testing and remedial phases) because it provides an infusion of dollars to complete a given task. With respect to the third phase (maintenance phase), consideration of other approaches is needed because the demand is for consistent and long-term funding. Two examples of approaches that can serve this need are defined in the following table.

Funding Option	Overview	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Ecological Management Fund</b>	Establishment of a fund similar to the Building Upkeep/Maintenance Fund that is used for ongoing maintenance of buildings, trails, and so forth within the park. Funding is typically on a year to year appropriation basis as dictated by the County Board in concert with the Metropolitan Council.	Establishes a stand-alone fund for this purpose.	Only as secure as the political will to contribute to the fund. Hard economic times and uncertain ability to maintain funding levels from year to year can make this approach vulnerable. (Whereas future development initiatives and even upkeep can be put off during hard times, stewardship of resources requires a year to year commitment.)
<b>Ecological Endowment Fund</b>	Establishment of an endowment fund for the perpetual maintenance of ecological systems within the park.	Principle investment that is put into the fund is “locked away” and cannot be used for any other purpose. Program is actually supported by the interest generated by the fund in a secure market as dictated by County policy. Great advantage is that the stream of funding available is much more assured and predictable. Also, it is a one-time investment that keeps on working for the County indefinitely.	Current enabling laws governing the Metropolitan Council may preclude the use of grant dollars for creating an endowment fund. County may also have governing policies that could affect utilization of this approach.

As the table indicates, the endowment fund offers the greatest long-term security in ensuring that funding levels would be sustained year after year.

As the table indicates, the endowment fund offers the greatest long-term security in ensuring that funding levels would be sustained year after year. In addition, the endowment could be set up so that a certain percentage of the interest earned each year would be used to build principal so that the fund grows as time goes on. Figure 6.3 illustrates this relationship. The distinct advantage of this is that the fund itself (and the interest it generates) grows as the stewardship program expands and requires more funding. Figure 6.3 illustrates this point.

Figure 6.3 – Growth of endowment fund as a percentage of interest is reinvested.

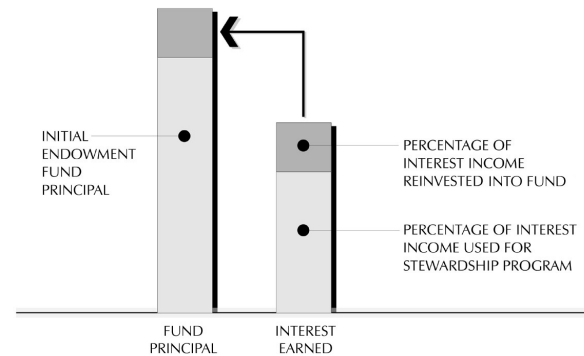
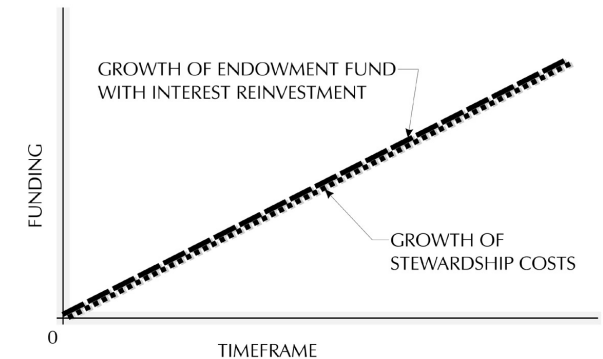


Figure 6.3 – Growth of endowment fund relative to expansion of stewardship program.



Under the framework of the endowment fund as presented, the long-term capital costs for the stewardship program could be *reduced substantially over a pay-as-you-go approach* since the fund generates interest income to support the program as well as a reinvestment back into the fund itself.

For the reasons define above, the endowment fund option offers a number of distinct advantages and therefore should be considered in concert with more traditional funding programs.

## Strategy for Implementing the Development Program

For the most part, future capital improvements for development within the park will be funded through grants secured from the Metropolitan Council and Dakota County.

The implementation strategy for the development program follows more traditional routes. For the most part, future capital improvements for development within the park will be funded through grants secured from the Metropolitan Council and Dakota County. As for priorities within this category, development initiatives were grouped in consideration of the following:

- ▶ Existing facility exhibits an immediate need (i.e., safety, dysfunctional, detrimental to long-term vitality of park, program need).
- ▶ Existing facility is antiquated and no longer effectively services public need.
- ▶ Existing need or new demands warrants development/redevelop of a certain facility.
- ▶ Facility is required to support high priority items.
- ▶ Facility cost.

The following table groups the line items listed in the cost estimate into various categories with no priority relative to other items. Note that categories are not linked to specific implementation sequences since actual project phasing will be a function of demand, opportunity, resources, and funding availability. Also note that items may be shifted between categories over time.

<b>Implementation Priority</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Implementation Focus</b>	<b>Total Costs (In Dollars)</b>
Projects currently funded or already included under the approved capital improvement program.	Schulze Lake Use Area (Phase I)	Focus is on development of the Visitor Center and related elements under the current grant.	1,910,000
	Holland Lake Use Area (Phase I)	Focus is on reconstruction of the shelter structure, parking lot development, landscaping, and miscellaneous improvements.	100,000
	Campground Use Area	Focus is on completing the development work for this area as defined under the master plan.	460,000
Priority A – Projects which offer high recreational values, protect public safety, and/or curtail ecological degradation.	Connector Trails	Focus is on completing the connector trail system as defined by the master plan.	1,300,000
	Natural Trails	Focus is on upgrading nature trail system throughout the park as defined by the master plan.	640,000
	Mountain Bike Trails	Focus is on improving safety and curtailing ecological degradation, as well as improving the overall quality of the trail.	60,000
	Equestrian Trails	Focus is on upgrading the equestrian trail system throughout the park as defined by the master plan.	200,000
	Trailside Amenities	Focus is on providing appropriate trailside features such as sitting areas, overlooks, and observation blinds.	150,000
	Signage program	Focus is on upgrading signage throughout the park.	140,000
Priority B – Redevelopment of antiquated or substandard high use facilities.	Beach Improvements (Schulze Lake Use Area)	Focus is on general upgrading of this use area as defined by the master plan.	390,000
	Holland Use Area (Phase II)	Focus is on completing the remainder of improvements not covered under the first phase.	35,000
	Johnny Cake Ridge Road Trailhead	Focus is on general upgrading of this trailhead as defined by the master plan.	215,000
	Equestrian Trailhead	Focus is on general upgrading of this trailhead as defined by the master plan.	190,000

Priority C – Projects that accommodate demand for new and enhanced recreational opportunities.	Camp Sacajawea	Focus is on expansion of this use area as demand warrants as defined by the master plan.	950,000
	Wheaton Pond Trailhead	Focus is on general upgrading of this trailhead as defined by the master plan as demand warrants.	100,000
	Canoe Course	Focus is on general upgrading of this feature as defined by the master plan.	30,000
Priority D – other projects.	Maintenance Facility	Focus is on relocating and upgrading this facility to meet future needs.	2,900,000
	Miscellaneous Site Amenities and Improvements	Includes all master plan items not otherwise listed above. Also includes demolition of County owned houses and structures.	820,000
Total Project Costs - All Phases			10,590,000
Contingency (not factored into above)			1,588,500
Total Project Costs - All Phase with Contingency			12,178,500
Project Fees and Charges			1,826,775
Total Project Costs - Fees and Contingency			14,005,275

With respect to long-term maintenance of buildings in the park, Dakota County Parks has an established building upkeep fund that is funded through the Dakota County. Critical to this funding approach is to make sure that the funds needed to maintain building development initiatives is provided for at the time that a new development occurs. Also important is having adequate funding in place for general long-term maintenance of the park, including trails, parking lots, the beach, signage, and so forth.

### Strategy for Land Acquisition Program

The Dakota County 2020 Comprehensive Plan provides an array of acquisition strategies that can be used for acquiring park land. This includes a right-of-first-refusal, life estates, and the use of condemnation under certain circumstances. With respect to Lebanon Hills, the predominant strategy expected to be used is to purchase from willing sellers as property becomes available.

From a shorter-term perspective, gaining trail easement rights along the north shore of Jensen Lake is a priority that should be secured in the nearest possible future to resolve this trail alignment issue. Given the sensitivity of this type of negotiation, no attempt has been made to predetermine the type of agreement that would best suit each party. Note here that the current property owners are aware of the desire for an easement and look forward to working through this issue in good faith with Dakota County.

*With respect to Lebanon Hills, the predominant strategy expected to be used is to purchase from willing sellers as property becomes available.*

## Policy-Related Issues Affecting Lebanon Hills

*The policy should limit stays to a maximum period of time of up to two weeks.*

*With the strong ecological focus of the master plan, eliminating the use of snowmobiles was highly supported by the Task Force and general public.*

Although not all of Dakota County Parks operations and management policies are reiterated here, a number of policy-related issues that held particular public interest or act in support of the master plan are considered in this section. The following considers each of these. (Note that each of these are defined in terms of the master plan recommendations, which will be forwarded to the Dakota County Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee and then the County Board for action as they deem appropriate. Any changes made would be reflected in the operating policies for the Dakota County Parks Department)

### Campground Long-Term Stay Policy

Of considerable public interest during the master planning process was the issue related to long-term stay (over two weeks) at the campground. This specifically relates to the older camp area near Johnny Cake Ridge Road that accommodates larger recreational vehicles and offers full utility support.

Based on public input during the planning process, a very strong consensus exists that the long-term stay policy that allows a certain percentage of the sites to be used by one visitor for an extended period of time should be changed to reflect policies more typical of regional park campgrounds. The policy should limit stays to a maximum period of time of up to two weeks. The objective of this policy shift is primarily to provide more opportunities for regional park users to gain access to campsites. With the growing popularity of close-to-home camping, the need for campsites within the region will increase. Given the strong public opinion that the campground should not be expanded beyond what is defined in the master plan, a clear need exists to provide more access to the campsites that are already developed in the park to service the growing regional needs. By limiting stay periods, day-to-day access to campsites can be substantially increased without having to construct more campsites.

Another perspective in support of a stay limit policy is public concern that many of the longer-term visitors are from out-of-state and therefore are not direct supporters of the regional park beyond paying the camping fees. Although these fees support operations and maintenance, they do not offset the tax contribution that regional residents pay in support of the regional park system, including Lebanon Hills.

### Ban on Snowmobiling in the Park

With the strong ecological focus of the master plan, eliminating the use of snowmobiles was highly supported by the Task Force and general public. In meeting with a local snowmobile club, it was also determined the trail is not part of any established trail network and was not considered of high value to the snowmobile community. At a little over four miles, the group felt it would not be very appealing for even an evening ride. Given this, coupled with the control problems being experienced (e.g., snowmobiles running off-trail), phasing out the use of snowmobiles in the park after the 2000/2001 winter season is recommended.



*Although the master plan calls for continuing a extensive network of horse trails within the park, long-term commercial use of those trails is not being advocated.*

## Commercial Use of Horse Trails

Although the master plan calls for continuing a extensive network of horse trails within the park, long-term commercial use of those trails is not being advocated. The heavy commercial use of the trails in the past has been shown to cause erosion, trail creep, compaction, and other ecological concerns. Dealing with the maintenance of these trails due to the extra wear and tear created by commercial use stresses an already over-extended maintenance capacity.

As a natural resource-based park, concern also exists about the aesthetic qualities of wide trails along popular trail corridors. As defined in Section V, the intent of the master plan is to narrow the widened corridors to a more reasonable and sustainable width. Along the more popular trails, heavier commercial use makes this a more challenging proposition.

With respect to the existing commercial operation, there has been a long history of cooperation between the owner and Dakota County. Based on this history, it would be expected that a good working relationship will continue until the point in time when the owner decides to cease operation. Although a timeframe has not been set, it is expected to be less than ten years, based on conversations with the owner. During that timeframe, it is recommended that Dakota County continue to work with the owner on resolving the maintenance issues caused by heavy commercial use of the trails. Various maintenance cost-sharing avenues should be explored as part of developing a strategy to deal with the ongoing maintenance burdens placed on the park by this commercial use.

Note that although Dakota County will not actively advocate for commercial use of the horse trails, it may not preclude a private vendor from coming into the park on occasion to offer trail rides as long as that use does not cause harm to the park beyond that which would be expected with normal use. To control this, it is recommended that Dakota County develop a commercial use policy for this type of activity.

## Use Conflict Resolution

The Dakota County Parks Department is responsible for enforcing Ordinance No. 107, which governs the use of the park. Although 100% ordinance compliance is not reasonably obtained, the objective is compliance sufficient to result in safe, positive recreational experiences for nearly all visitors and the protection of resources and facilities. The principal methods of promoting ordinance compliance include dispensing information to the public (signs, brochures), personal contact (with Park Patrol, Trail Patrol, park staff) and enforcement action, when necessary.

The frequency and severity of use conflicts, such as between two authorized trail uses, can be an indication of facility design flaws, overuse, maintenance shortcomings or other problems. Monitoring and analyzing use conflicts is a valuable feedback mechanism for the Parks Department. In cases where use conflicts are the result of design deficiencies, alternative design solutions will be evaluated. The Department is committed to providing a pleasant park setting in line with the master plan and will support this by monitoring and analyzing use conflicts and implementing solutions determined to be appropriate.

## Off-Leash Pet Areas

One of the emerging park use trends is the demand for designated off-leash pet exercise and training areas and off-leash pet trails. Input gained during the planning process from citizens interested in this issue, along with technical review of what other agencies are doing in this regard, suggests that there is a demand for the development of these facilities within regional parks such as Lebanon Hills (as well as parks in the surrounding communities). Advocacy groups that participated in the planning process have also done substantial research on the issue and provided a number of examples of how these areas can be designed to address the need with presumably minimal disruption to other activities or the natural resources. In addition, these groups have worked constructively with various communities to refine ordinances and park rules to better serve the needs of pet owners without compromising the safety and experience of other people visiting the park.

With respect to the development of off-leash pet areas in the regional park system, a number of the regional park agencies have established or are testing off-leash areas or trails using a variety of design approaches. In some of these cases, marked successes have been shown. In others, success is more limited and new approaches may be needed to address the issues. The most common problems cited in the latter cases are that the areas are too small or a lack of trails exist within the designated space for people to walk along with their pet.

From a needs assessment standpoint, establishing legitimate off-leash pet exercise areas or pet trails within the regional and local park systems within this geographic area seems to have merit and warrants further investigation by Dakota County in concert with the local municipalities. Determining whether Lebanon Hills or some other park(s) are suitable locations for this type of use should be part of a broader discussion in which all options are carefully considered. Since this evaluation has yet to occur, determining whether or not off-leash dog areas or trails are appropriate within this park has also yet to be determined. Given this, the master plan allows some flexibility on how this issue will be ultimately addressed in Lebanon Hills.

Although the master plan does not draw any final conclusions, it is clear that establishing off-leash pet areas and/or trails would offer numerous benefits to pet owners. Based on anecdotal evidence, it can be surmised that responsible pet owners pose few concerns to the safety of the general public. On the other hand, a number of concerns were cited during the public process that warrant consideration as Dakota County addresses this issue in a broader context. Areas of concern include:

- Impact to natural resources – as a park with a strong ecological underpinning, impacts to wildlife was of concern to many of those that participated in the public process.

*Determining whether Lebanon Hills or some other park(s) are suitable locations for this type of use should be part of a broader discussion in which all options are carefully considered.*

- ▶ Personal safety – anecdotal evidence suggests a real concern about personal safety when encountering off-leash pets in the park that are threatening to other trail users (perceived or actual).
- ▶ Management – concern was expressed that by “inviting” pet owners to the park by providing off-leash areas the propensity for people having their pets off-leash in non-designated areas is increased.

Based on public comment, allowing *on-leash* pets in the park that are under the direct control of the owner while in the park remains appropriate. However, no clear mandate exists for providing off-leash pets areas or trails within Lebanon Hills Regional Park until the issue is considered in a broader regional context to determine the most appropriate way to address this issue and the concerns listed above.

## Public Involvement in Implementing the Master Plan

*Dakota County is committed to continuing public involvement through the implementation of the master plan.*

Dakota County is committed to continuing public involvement through the implementation of the master plan. The degree to which this will occur will vary depending on what aspect of the plan is being implemented. For larger scale projects, such as the Visitor Center, public involvement in the actual design process for the facility will be fairly extensive and involve representation from key stakeholders. In addition, forums for broader public input (e.g., open houses and presentations) would also be used as needed to communicate and exchange ideas with interested citizens. For smaller scale projects, such as a trail realignment for erosion purposes, notifications of interested parties or advocates would be a more appropriate approach.

The objectives associated with involving citizens in the implementation process include:

- ▶ Determine who the stakeholders are and their interest in a particular development initiative.
- ▶ Understand their needs and unique perspectives.
- ▶ Identify and understand concerns and problems.
- ▶ Develop alternatives and find appropriate solutions with input from stakeholders.

In addition to formalized processes for particular projects, Dakota County has an established Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PARAC) that advises the County Board on development initiatives within the park. The public is welcome to attend its regularly scheduled meetings. Also, Dakota County is continuing to develop numerous tools to provide a consistent level of communication with interested citizens. (Refer to the Operations Section below for more detail on these tools.)

## Master Plan Revisions and Updates

As noted on page 5.1, the master plan is a dynamic planning tool that will evolve and be fine-tuned as it moves through implementation steps. Over time, there may be justification for revisions and updates to the master plan in response to new information, trends, and general demands. Among the trigger points that could prompt review of the master plan are the following:

- ▶ Requests from citizens and special interest groups to review a particular aspect of the plan. This would occur when Dakota County has determined that adequate justification has been submitted to warrant review of a given situation.
- ▶ Recreational trend information uncovers a recreational need that has not been adequately addressed by the master plan.
- ▶ Changed circumstances pertaining to existing uses warrants review of the master plan.

- ▶ Existing built facilities have proven inadequate to meet demand or require design changes to improve their capacity to meet recreational needs or address maintenance and safety concerns.

If a review is found to be warranted, Dakota County would undertake an appropriate public process that includes input from PARAC and groups that are directly impacted by a given concern and other groups that have a general interest in the park. This multiple user group approach to reviewing a given situation ensures that conclusions drawn are ones that can be supported by the broader community. It also ensures that a balance between recreational uses and ecological preservation is maintained.

## Operations Plan and Maintenance Plan

*The Dakota County Parks Department is charged with the operation of the County's park system, including Lebanon Hills Regional Park.*

The Dakota County Parks Department is charged with the operation of the County's park system, including Lebanon Hills Regional Park. The Dakota County Board of Commissioners establishes policies and goals for the park system and through an annual budgeting process provides capital and operating funds for the Department. A Park and Recreation Advisory Committee (PARAC), appointed by the County Board of Commissioners, serves as an advocate for an improved and enhanced park and trail system in the County. The specific responsibilities of the PARAC, which are outlined in County Ordinance No. 120, are as follows:

- ▶ Review proposals and make recommendations concerning park and trail acquisition and development;
- ▶ Review and make recommendations concerning recreation programming, fees for facility use and park use policies;
- ▶ Recommend supporting or enhancing natural resources in County parks and regional trail corridors;
- ▶ Provide input into the County Park Policy Plan and Park Master Plans for park development site planning;
- ▶ Review and make recommendation on the Bikeway Capital Improvement Program, signage, kiosks, and trail connections;
- ▶ Perform fact-finding tasks as directed by the County Board.

## Ordinances

*Public use and enjoyment of the County park system, including Lebanon Hills Regional Park, is controlled by Ordinance No. 107, Park Ordinance.*

Public use and enjoyment of the County park system, including Lebanon Hills Regional Park, is controlled by Ordinance No. 107, Park Ordinance, (the Ordinance) which was last revised on June 3, 1997. The Ordinance incorporates pertinent Minnesota statutes, and addresses the following issues:

- ▶ Regulation of Public Use
- ▶ Regulation of General Conduct
- ▶ Regulations Pertaining to General Parkland Operation
- ▶ Protection of Property, Structures, and Natural Resources
- ▶ Regulation of Recreation Activity
- ▶ Regulation of Motorized Vehicles, Traffic and Parking

*The Parks Department has an annual budget of approximately \$3.5 million to operate and maintain the County's park system and approximately 35 permanent employees.*

*Maintenance of facilities and lands is essential to protect public investment, enhance natural resource qualities and achieve the County's goals of providing users clean, safe, enjoyable year round park experiences.*

## Enforcement

Park visitors are informed of park rules and regulations in a variety of ways. Kiosks and signs are strategically located to address specific information about park hours, trails, permitted and prohibited activities, fees, and directions. Park patrol educate visitors and enforce the Ordinance, where necessary. They patrol the park in vehicles, on bicycles and on foot. During the winter months, park patrol on vehicles, snowmobiles and skis monitor park activities. In addition, a volunteer ski patrol maintains a presence on the ski trails and calls on the Park Patrol, as needed. Local law enforcement agencies and the Sheriff's Department respond to emergencies and criminal complaints.

## General Operations

The Parks Department has an annual budget of approximately \$3.5 million to operate and maintain the County's park system and approximately 35 permanent employees. In addition, approximately 40-50 seasonal employees are hired each year as maintenance workers, park patrol, concession workers, recreation workers, lifeguards, gate attendants, and campground attendants. Volunteers assist with outdoor education programs, patrol, park clean-ups and a variety of special events. Contractual agreements are also in place with outside agencies (e.g., Minnesota Conservation Corps, Tree Trust) for some maintenance and natural resource work.

Revenues from the facilities and services at Lebanon Hills Regional Park in 2000 include: \$190,404 from the campground; \$7,200 from the picnic shelters at Jensen and Holland Lakes; \$10,362 from the lodge at Camp Sacajawea; \$8,973 from the beach (down from \$44,770 in 1999 due to flooding); \$386 from cross-country skiing; \$6,195 for outdoor education programs; and \$243 for special use permits.

The Metropolitan Council's *Annual Use Estimate of the Metropolitan Regional Park System for 1999* (April 2000) reported that 335,600 visits were made to Lebanon Hills Regional Park in 1999, and that visits to the County park system increased 93% between 1988 and 1999. Planned improvements to the park are expected to increase park use and, therefore, increase revenue.

## Maintenance

Maintenance of facilities and lands is essential to protect public investment, enhance natural resource qualities and achieve the County's goals of providing users clean, safe, enjoyable year round park experiences. The Dakota County Parks Department has a clearly defined maintenance program. Reporting to the Park Director is the Manager, Park Development and Maintenance. The following staff report to the Manager:

- ▶ Maintenance Superintendent
- ▶ Planning/Engineering Assistant
- ▶ Senior Planner, Natural Resources

Reporting to the Maintenance Superintendent are the following staff:

- ▶ 4 Supervisors
- ▶ 1 Mechanic
- ▶ 16 Parkkeepers
- ▶ Seasonal maintenance workers

The predominant categories of tasks accomplished by maintenance staff are:

- ▶ Grounds maintenance
- ▶ Building custodial
- ▶ Facility maintenance/repair
- ▶ Equipment maintenance/repair
- ▶ Natural resource management
- ▶ Program support
- ▶ Miscellaneous shop duties
- ▶ Emergency response
- ▶ Other miscellaneous/unique duties

Lebanon Hills Regional Park has a well-developed maintenance facility that also serves Thompson County Park and the Big Rivers Regional Trail. In 2000, eight full time maintenance staff was assigned here (see Development Master Plan, p. 5.47 for detail).

*Accomplishing the maintenance needs of Lebanon Hills Regional Park is a huge challenge.*

Accomplishing the maintenance needs of Lebanon Hills Regional Park is a huge challenge. The Park is the largest in the system (1829 acres acquired to date) and the most used (335,600 visitations in 1999). Adding to this challenge are a decentralized development approach that creates many high priority maintenance destinations; serious water management problems; highly erodable soils; and surrounding development that creates a whole set of impacts to the park and require a maintenance response.

Dakota County recognizes the need to remain committed to the maintenance needs of the park and to meet the new needs/priorities identified by the master plan. It is unlikely that existing staff and budget resources will be sufficient. Although increased funding is critical, perhaps even more important is increasing the number of staff. As an example, trail rehabilitation and natural resource management have an initial cash intensive need but ultimate success requires stewardship for many years to achieve desired results. This takes staff with the knowledge and time to commit to this stewardship.

Traditional and non-traditional funding and staffing sources will have to be pursued to meet the maintenance needs of the park and the master plan objectives.

*Dakota County's mission and vision goals have identified public opportunities for natural resource-based recreation and education as being of significant importance.*

## Outdoor Education and Programming

Dakota County's mission and vision goals have identified public opportunities for natural resource-based recreation and education as being of significant importance. Providing outdoor education and recreation opportunities for people of all abilities is the cornerstone of the Parks Department's mission of "enriching lives by providing high quality recreation and education opportunities in harmony with natural resource preservation and stewardship."

The goals of the County's Outdoor Education Plan, dated June 1998, are:

- ▶ To protect or enhance the health of the ecosystem in Dakota County Parks.
- ▶ To provide outdoor education services which create a sense of stewardship for Dakota County Park's natural and cultural heritage.
- ▶ To promote increased understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of natural and cultural resources.
- ▶ To provide an appropriate balance between resource preservation and recreational use.

The Outdoor Education Plan includes a list of recommendations that serve as a blueprint and springboard for future creative programming and initiatives that fulfill the changing needs of Dakota County residents. Implementation of the recommendations will take place both in the short and long term depending on available resources. Currently, the following recommendations are being implemented; providing programs and events for the general public, partnering with other agencies and organizations, marketing and promoting of outdoor education programs, and providing outdoor education services for special populations, e.g., at-risk youth, seniors, women, and low-income park users.

Outdoor education encompasses environmental, historical, cultural, and recreational programs, including parent and child fishing events, kayak and canoe lessons, prairie hikes, stargazing, historical bike rides, dog sledding lessons candlelight skis, and moonlight snowshoe hikes. Many of these opportunities are provided through partnerships with other agencies, including the National Park Service, REI (an outdoor retail store), Friends of the Mississippi River, National Audubon Society, Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Safety Council and Wilderness Inquiry. An Outdoor Education Coordinator plans and oversees outdoor education programming in the parks.

A 1999 grant from the LCMR allowed the Department, in collaboration with Dakota County Community Corrections, Social Services and Public Health as well as some local cities and school districts, to develop a comprehensive experiential based adventure program for youth at risk and under-served youth in the County. An Adventure Learning Specialist manages this program. The objectives of the Adventure Learning Program are to have a safe, fun, adventurous experience while working cooperatively as a group, learning to trust team members and self, developing effective group interaction skills, and gaining a greater appreciation and awareness of the environment.

*Outside agencies also use the park for their activities.*

Outside agencies also use the park for their activities. Scouts and other youth groups conduct meetings, perform community service, and often use the group campground at Camp Sacajawea. Schools use the park for athletic events such as cross-country meets and practices. In addition, the School for Environmental Studies, which is associated with the Minnesota Zoological Park, uses the park for an outdoor learning laboratory.

*Dakota County has a comprehensive outreach effort, in an effort to increase public awareness of its park facilities, programs, and services.*

## Outreach and Marketing

Dakota County has a comprehensive outreach effort, in an effort to increase public awareness of its park facilities, programs, and services. This outreach effort has various components, including the following:

**Printed Materials:** Dakota County has developed and distributes on a regular basis brochures and maps, including a park map, individual park winter and summer trail maps, Lebanon Hills Campground brochures, picnic opportunities brochure, and a comprehensive seasonal outdoor education program booklet. Park program fliers are also distributed to County departments, libraries, community agencies, outdoor retailers, and other contacts throughout the community.

**Electronic Communication:** Dakota County is expanding the use of its web page to inform citizens about the County's functions and services (e.g., Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meetings, the master planning process, park facilities, and programs). In addition, public use of the County Parks Department's email continues to increase.

**Other Outreach:** Other forms of outreach and marketing include displays at the Dakota County Fair, articles in the County Update (a citizens' newsletter) participation in a diversity fair, the production of flyers and brochures and the display of information at County Service Centers and park kiosks. The County also publishes news releases and advertisements in local community and metropolitan area newspapers that highlight upcoming programs and facility openings. The County also promotes park use through radio and television interviews, feature articles and presentations to other County departments and local agencies.

**Marketing Initiatives:** Dakota County will be developing a comprehensive marketing plan to increase public awareness, understanding, and use of park facilities, services and programs. In addition, the marketing plan will identify the need to expand and diversify marketing and communication efforts to advance park use by minority populations and special needs groups.